

NEW ZEALAND HONEY

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FIFTEEN YEARS' MARKETING

REVIEW BY MR H. W. CASTLE

NEED FOR ADVERTISING.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)

(By Air Mail)

LONDON, November 9.

For 15 years Mr H. W. Castle has been responsible for the marketing of New Zealand honey in Great Britain and other European countries. On his retirement as European representative of the Honey Control Board, he has reviewed his stewardship and has made suggestions which may be of use to the board in the future.

In 1920, in consequence of a substantial duty imposed by the United States, he explained, New Zealand had to look for an outlet for her honey in the United Kingdom, and in 1921 an arrangement was made between the New Zealand Co-operative Honey Producers' Association, Ltd. (then representing about 95 per cent. of the beekeepers), and Messrs A. J. Mills and Co., Ltd., of Tooley street. Mr Castle was at that time manager of Mills's Produce and Canned Goods Department, and having had previous experience in the marketing of honey, the matter was entrusted to him. At this time there were large quantities of honey in the United Kingdom, and the war price had slumped from around 250s per hundredweight to the neighbourhood of 40s per hundredweight; in fact, some honey was being offered as low as 25s. It was the aim of the Honey Producers' Association to market their honey in a packed form, for which purpose it was necessary to establish a blending and packing depot in London.

It took a considerable time to find suitable premises for the purpose, but eventually (in December, 1921) a depot was established and plant installed at the Benbow wharf of Messrs Beck and Poltizer, all the honey being landed direct on to the wharf from barges.

AN ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN.

The price first quoted for 1lb glass jars was 16s per dozen, less an allowance to wholesalers, and this price was brought down by successive stages to 12s 6d per dozen without any very appreciable in-

Various schemes for popularising the honey were inaugurated, and a mascot in the form of a man-bee which was distributed in exchange for coupons became exceedingly popular. The creation of the man-bee was due to the fact that the words "Imperial Bee"—the brand registered in New Zealand by the Honey Producers' Association—could not be registered here. In order to protect the name, the man-bee was created, and this figure was registered not only in the United Kingdom but throughout Europe, the words "Imperial Bee" being used in conjunction therewith. Since then, of course, protection has been secured automatically through length of usage.

HIGH COMMISSIONER'S DEPARTMENT.

MENT.

The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 and 1925, continued Mr Castle, provided a valuable means of bringing the honey to the notice of a wider public, and large quantities of the honey were sold daily. From 1925 onwards close contact was maintained with the publicity officer (Mr H. T. B. Drew) of the New Zealand Government in London, and opportunity was taken of collaborating with the High Commissioner's Office in exhibitions all over the country.

"I always found everyone at New Zealand House, from the High Commissioner downwards, ready and willing to give all possible assistance," said Mr Castle, "and Mr H. T. P. Drew's services in particular were of great value."

"Early in 1929, the business requiring larger premises, the packing depot was removed to another of Beck and Pollitzer's wharves—viz., Imperial wharf, Bankside (the wharf was, in fact, named after the honey!). New and more up-to-date plant was installed, and the cost of handling reduced. At approximately the same time the price of the 11b glass jars was increased to 14s 6d.

AGENCY TRANSFERRED.

"In April, 1930, the agency was transferred from Messrs A. J. Mills and Co., Ltd., to Messrs C. and E. Morton, Ltd., when I became Home trade manager for C. and E. Morton, Ltd. As a consequence of this change the packing depot was transferred early in 1932 to part of Messrs Morton's premises at Millwall. In June of that year the whole of the depot was destroyed by fire, together with all the honey there stored. This was one of the fires of 1932! Six months later the premises had been rebuilt, and new plant was installed. We were then in the midst of the world depression, and unfortunately at this stage it was found necessary to discontinue advertising. The extensive advertising of the past, however, still carried the trade along, the brand 'Imperial Bee' by that time being literally a household word, not only in this country, but in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and—to a lesser extent—in Germany.

"The brand having been so well established a small expenditure from the end of 1933 onwards would have been sufficient to keep the wheels moving. Nevertheless, it was found possible to maintain the price of 14s 6d right through the period of depression until, in fact, the end of September, 1935. Last month, however, the price of the 11b glass jars was reduced from 14s 6d to 12s 6d.

"Having severed my connection with Messrs C. and E. Morton in July, 1934, I was not responsible for the marketing of the honey from that time, although I retained until the end of last month my position as honorary representative in Europe of the Honey Control Board, in that connection arranging where possible special displays, exhibitions, etc., and in general dealing with matters not actually appertaining to marketing.

NEED FOR ADVERTISING.

"It has been stated, generally by per-

"In 1921 New Zealand could not obtain within 30s per cwt of the price of Californian honey, whereas from 1923 onwards the dominions obtained an average of 35s above the price of Californian—these references apply to bulk (original packages) and not to 'Imperial Bee' in packed form. By 1924 it was acknowledged that New Zealand held the premier place as far as honey was concerned. Advertising expenditure covered a multitude of items such as the printing of lists of stockholders (previously referred to), the supply of gifts under the coupon schemes running from time to time, special displays and exhibitions, booklets on the value of honey as a food, and booklets for children circulated through the schools all over the country. Pamphlets, etc., are still in use. By her propaganda work the Dominion considerably increased the consumption of honey in the United Kingdom.

"In addition to organising the sales in the United Kingdom it was my duty to introduce the honey on the Continent of Europe and elsewhere. A considerable trade was built up in Scandinavia and continued until the world depression brought in quotas, licences, currency restrictions, etc. The nucleus of a good trade in Germany and Austria was built up through a special Packing Depot in Wiesbaden and 'Imperial Bee' was becoming well-known throughout Germany when the financial crisis there put a stopper on the business. In connection with the German business a booklet on the food value of honey was published in English-German, and these pamphlets were accepted and distributed in schools throughout Germany.

INDIAN MARKET.

"An entry to the Indian market was obtained in 1928 as a result of our sending to H.E. the Viceroy a case of glass jars of 'Imperial Bee,' and the appointment of Allen Bros. (India), Ltd.—who had branches throughout India—as sub-agents.

"I have always contended," Mr Castle concluded, "and see no reason whatever in the light of past experience to alter my opinion, that it is better—far better—to maintain price and advertise rather than reduce price and save the advertising. If the amount spent on advertising had not been spent the producers in New Zealand would have lost very considerably more by reduced prices than the amount spent in advertising. In addition, the value of their goodwill in 'Imperial Bee' was increased by every penny spent in advertising."